

FINDING CALM IN THE STORM: HYPNOTHERAPY FOR MARITAL DISTRESS

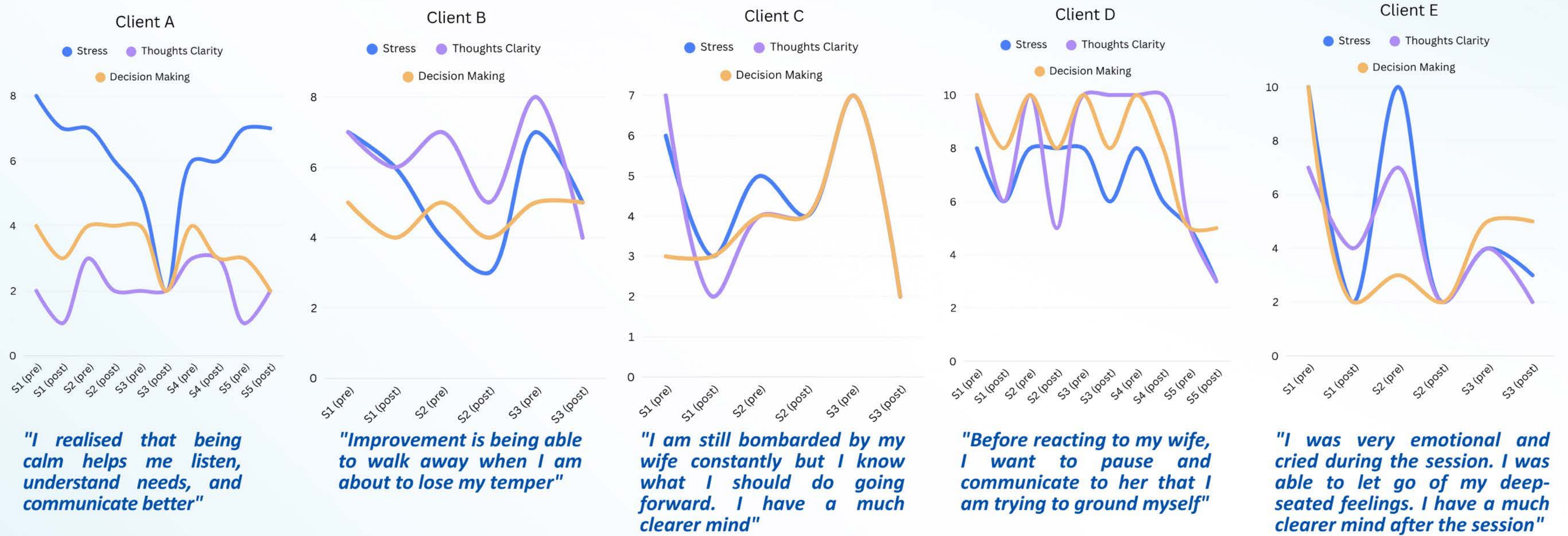
Clinical Insights on Multiple Case Series

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Marital distress can significantly impact individuals, often manifesting as sadness, worry, heightened tension, anxiety, and depression. This study explores whether hypnotherapy can support individuals experiencing marital conflict, particularly when their partners are not ready to engage in couple-based interventions. Rather than waiting for partner involvement, it examines whether individual hypnotherapeutic work can reduce stress, enhance cognitive clarity, and improve relational decision-making, and whether these changes may positively influence their relational dynamics.

From a scale of 1 to 10:

- Stress: 1 being most calm and 10 being highly stressed.
- Thoughts Clarity: 1 being most clear in thoughts and 10 being highly unclear.
- Decision Making: 1 being most confident in decision making and 10 being highly indecisive.



THERAPEUTIC TECHNIQUES



Safe Space Imagery

Visualisation of a safe place that functions as an internal anchor for grounding and emotional regulation during stress.



Parts Therapy

Facilitates identification and dialogue between conflicting internal "parts" of the self. Supports integration and alignment.



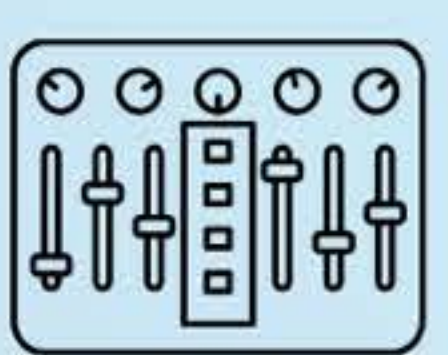
Future Orientation

A forward-focused visualisation where clients mentally rehearse adaptive coping and desired outcomes.



Inner Child Healing

Regression-based work targeting early emotional imprints to foster reparenting, self-compassion, and emotional integration.



Control Room of the Mind

A metaphorical technique where thoughts and emotions are visualised as adjustable controls.

EXPERIENTIAL OUTCOMES

Intrapersonal Shift

- Overall, there was a reduction in stress within 3 sessions though fluctuations linked to ongoing marital conflict and absent partner participation are present.
- Growing trend of internal congruence such as alignment of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours across the sessions.
- Individual therapeutic work produced relational ripple effects such as reduced reactivity and a decreased need to "win" in conflicts.

Relational Shift

- Through their narrative expressions, the clients gained insight that relational change can occur even without both partners' participation, and that relational shift does not necessarily require fixing or changing one's partner.
- Although Client B's spouse was initially not keen to attend counselling, she later acknowledged to Client B's friend that she had observed positive changes in Client B, commenting that "Client B has changed a bit."
- Client A's spouse agreed to attend a joint session after Client A completed five individual sessions. Through the therapeutic process, Client A gained insight into relational patterns such as not listening, blaming, and reacting defensively, and recognised how these behaviours contributed to their marital conflict. This increased self-awareness appeared to have a positive impact on her spouse and their relational dynamic.

KEY LEARNINGS

The Importance of Screening

- Clarification of hypnotherapy myths and the use of a suitability screening questionnaire helped identify clients who were appropriate for this modality. This reduced the likelihood of engaging clients for whom the intervention may not have been suitable.
- Clients mentioned they did not feel uncomfortable but instead, felt relaxed and relieved during sessions.

Adaptability of the Modality

- Techniques and interventions had to be adapted according to the client's presenting concerns and therapeutic needs.
- Flexibility in pacing and delivery was important to ensure psychological safety and therapeutic containment.

Implications for Practitioners

- This modality should be facilitated by trained professionals, as emotionally intense material may emerge and potentially result in *abreaction.
- Clients experiencing severe mental health conditions (e.g. active psychosis, schizophrenia, or significant delusional symptoms) may not be suitable for this modality, particularly if they have difficulty distinguishing internal experiences from reality.
- Services implementing this modality should ensure adequate clinical supervision, safety protocols, and practitioner competency.

*An abreaction in hypnotherapy refers to an intense emotional or physical response that may occur when unresolved memories or suppressed emotions surface during the therapeutic process. It can involve reactions such as crying, fear, anger, or distress, and requires careful, trauma-informed management by a trained practitioner.